UNITED NATIONS

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Secretariat

ST/AI/281/Rev.1
9 April 1990

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: EXTERNAL STUDIES PROGRAMME*

1. The purpose of this administrative instruction is to outline the revised procedures by which staff members may apply for assistance under the external studies programme authorized by the General Assembly within the budgetary provisions for staff training and development and to describe the conditions under which assistance will be granted. This instruction supersedes and combines administrative instructions ST/AI/281 and Add.1 and 2 of 17 June 1981, 19 September 1984 and 20 January 1986 respectively, on the external studies programme with effect from 1 April 1990.

2. Objective: The objective of the external studies programme is to enhance the competence of staff members to perform their present functions or functions of a new assignment for which they have already been selected.

3. Eligibility: Staff members of the Secretariat at all levels whose terms of appointment are governed by staff rules 101.1 to 112.8 and staff rules 200.1 to 212.7 are eligible for the external studies programme provided there is expectation of continued service for at least one year after completion of the proposed studies. For requests involving leave, the equivalent of full-time attendance of at least one academic term (i.e. at least three months), expectation of continued service for at least two years will be required.

4. Type of studies: The programme covers such studies as specialized training, research, seminars, refresher courses, professional conferences and workshops and other training events. These studies can be authorized on the condition that equivalent training is not available within the Secretariat or other agencies of

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* Personnel Manual Index No. 4480.

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the common system to which Secretariat staff have access. Courses of study within a programme leading to a university degree could be covered, as long as such courses also meet the other conditions specified in paragraph 2 above.

5. Assistance provided: The external studies programme provides assistance by payment of tuition fees, travel, per diem and/or cost of books and other necessary supplies. The programme also covers appropriate expenses to enable disabled staff members to participate in this programme. Executive offices and departments are encouraged to share in the expenses to be incurred to enable a larger number of staff to benefit from this programme.

6. Duration of studies: Under the external studies programme, courses of study may range from one day to a maximum of one year. The studies may be pursued during working hours or the staff member's own time.

7. Leave arrangements: Special leave is required for studies during working hours. Such requests should be addressed to the Training Service of the Office of Human Resources Management, which will advise the department concerned or OHRM in cases where such leave, with or without pay, is requested for the purpose of pursuing studies or doing research.

8. Forfeiture of entitlement: If a staff member resigns while pursuing studies or within one or two years, where applicable, after completion of external studies, he or she will normally be required to refund to the Organization the full amount of pay received in connection with special leave, as well as any financial assistance granted under the programme.

9. Application procedure (staff member): A staff member interested in applying for external studies should first clarify what he or she hopes to achieve by the studies to be conducted. Advice on the type of studies that can best achieve this purpose can be obtained from colleagues, executive offices or the Training Service. The staff member should then determine, in consultation with his or her department, the type of leave required and what the financial implications of undertaking such studies might be. The possibility of combining studies with a mission assignment, home leave or annual leave should also be explored at this time. The staff member should then follow the steps outlined below:

(a) Obtain a copy of form P.138 and complete section I. At Headquarters these forms may be obtained from the Training Service, room S-2445 or from executive offices; at offices away from Headquarters these forms are available from the personnel section or office.

(b) Submit the form to his or her supervisor for completion of section II of the form, the supervisor's recommendation.

A detailed description of the course and a job description must be attached to the form.

10. Application procedure (supervisor and Executive/Administrative Officer): The completed application is then transmitted, normally by the supervisor, to the Executive Officer or the Chief of Administration, who fills in section III. Once

completed, forms should be sent to: Chief, Training Service, room S-2445 Headquarters, New York. It should be kept in mind that applications must reach the Training Service at least six weeks in advance of the start of the proposed studies to allow sufficent time for processing.

11. Approval procedure: After the application reaches the Training Service, it goes through the following steps:

(a) The application is evaluated by the Training Service to ensure that it meets the established criteria and that all information is complete. This may require discussion with the applicant, the department or the Executive Officer. The Training Service decides without further reference on applications involving less than $200 and leave of less than five working days.

(b) For applications involving expenses ranging from $200 to $2,000 and/or leave of more than five working days, the Training Service makes a recommendation on the case and submits the application to the Advisory Panel on External Studies. The Panel makes a final decision on granting of assistance.

(c) For applications involving expenses of more than $2,000 and/or leave of half a year or more, the Advisory Panel on External Studies makes a recommendation to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management or another staff member appointed by him who makes the final decision.

(d) The decision of the Panel or the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management is communicated to the staff member, the Executive Officer or the Chief of Administration, and the Personnel Officer.

It is then the responsibility of the staff member to register for the course or events requested under the external studies programme.

12. The Advisory Panel on External Studies: The Advisory Panel, appointed by the Secretary-General, is composed of the Director of the Staff Administration and Training Division, Office of Human Resources Management, and two other members, one of whom is appointed on the recommendation of the Headquarters Staff Committee. A member of the Training Service acts as Secretary to the Panel. The Advisory Panel makes decisions on the granting of assistance in the cases indicated in paragraph 11 (b) above; in other cases its role is to make recommendations to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management.

13. Follow-up: In order that the Training Service may evaluate the effectiveness of external studies, staff members who benefit from the programme must submit to the Training Service a brief report on the studies undertaken within one month of the completion of the studies. Participation in the external studies programme will be recorded in the staff member's official status file.

14. External studies language programme: The external studies programme also covers assistance for the study of the official languages of the United Nations in certain cases.

(a) Objective: This assistance is provided to give eligible staff members the same opportunity to learn or improve their command of the official languages of the United Nations as staff serving at duty stations where language courses are organized by the United Nations.

(b) Eligibility: Staff at all levels serving at duty stations where no language courses are provided are eligible for assistance under this programme. Where arrangements exist for staff to attend language courses organized by United Nations specialized agencies or other United Nations organs and programmes, staff should continue to utilize these arrangements. Eligibility is restricted to staff whose appointments are expected to extend for at least six months beyond the commencement of the language course applied for.

(c) Type of studies: The programme normally covers the study of the official languages of the United Nations only, with staff encouraged to focus on the working languages of their duty station. However, in cases where the situation at a particular duty station requires a command of the local language, assistance may be granted. Language studies may include group or individual courses or correspondence courses conducted by institutions with a recognized status. Normally assistance is not provided for language courses administered by private teachers. Preference should be given to language courses offered locally outside working hours. Assistance for language studies covers the study of only one language at a time.

(d) Assistance provided: The external studies programme provides assistance for language studies by payment of tuition fees. The cost of books, stationery, transportation, etc. is to be borne by the staff member and will not be reimbursed.

(e) Application procedure: The staff member should obtain a copy of form P.138 from the personnel section or office or from the Executive Office and complete section I, being sure to provide all the information requested. Where more than one level is covered in a single application, dates of completion of each level should be indicated. Section II of the application form must be completed by the staff member's supervisor only if the proposed study is to take place during working hours. It should be noted that it is not necessary to submit a job description with the application. Section III of the application form should be completed by the Executive Office of the Department of Public Information for staff of information offices and by the Chief of the Field Personnel Section, Field Operations Division for Field Service and other mission staff. Applications must reach the Training Service as early as possible, in any case before the start of the proposed studies.

(f) Approval procedures for applications for language studies are the same as those outlined in paragraph 11 above.

15. Duty stations away from Headquarters will be authorized to review and approve locally requests for external studies meeting certain criteria of duration and cost under terms to be communicated annually by the Training Service. The conditions established above for the granting of assistance will apply to these applications.

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16. Further information on the external studies programme and application forms may be obtained from the Training Service, Office of Human Resources Management, New York, or from Executive Officers/Chiefs of Administration.